

## 1 CLAIMS:

2

3 1. A method for mixing meat products, the method including the steps of:

4 (a) providing a comminuted first meat product having a first pH;

5 (b) providing a comminuted second meat product having a second pH different from  
6 the first pH;7 (c) forming an intermediate combination comprising a quantity of the second meat  
8 product at a temperature at or above the freezing point of the second meat  
9 product and a plurality of pieces of the first meat product at a temperature below  
10 the freezing point of the first meat product; and

11 (d) mixing the intermediate combination.

12

13 2. The method of Claim 1 wherein the step of providing the first meat product includes the  
14 steps of:15 (a) forming a quantity of the first meat product into at least one elongated strand;  
16 and17 (b) reducing the temperature of the elongated strand to the temperature below the  
18 freezing point of the first meat product.

19

20 3. The method of Claim 2 further including the step of:

1 (a) breaking the elongated strand of the first meat product at the temperature below  
2 the freezing temperature of the first meat product into a plurality of pieces.  
3

4 4. The method of Claim 3 wherein the step of breaking the elongated strand of first meat  
5 product into the plurality of pieces includes the step of:

6 (a) applying bending force to the elongated strand of frozen first meat product at  
7 points along the length of the strand.  
8

9 5. The method of Claim 4 wherein at least a portion of the bending force to the elongated  
10 strand of frozen first meat product is applied by contact with the second meat product.  
11

12 6. The method of Claim 1 wherein the step of mixing the intermediate combination  
13 includes:

14 (a) mixing the intermediate combination until substantially all of the first meat  
15 product in the combination reaches a temperature above the freezing point of the  
16 first meat product.  
17

18 7. The method of Claim 1 wherein the temperature of the first meat product pieces in the  
19 intermediate combination at the time the combination is formed comprises a  
20 temperature no greater than 20 degrees Fahrenheit.  
21

- 1 8. The method of Claim 1 wherein the temperature of the second meat product in the  
2 intermediate combination at the time the combination is formed is between  
3 approximately 33 degrees Fahrenheit and 65 degrees Fahrenheit.  
4
- 5 9. The method of Claim 2 wherein the step of forming the first meat product into at least  
6 one elongated strand includes the steps of:  
7 (a) forcing the quantity of first meat product through a grinder screen having at  
8 least one grinder screen opening.  
9
- 10 10. The method of Claim 9 wherein the step of forcing the first meat product through the  
11 grinder screen raises the temperature of the first meat product from a temperature no  
12 greater than zero degrees Fahrenheit to a temperature between 23 to 28 degrees  
13 Fahrenheit.  
14
- 15 11. The method of Claim 10 further including the step of reducing the temperature of the  
16 first meat product to a temperature no greater than 20 degrees Fahrenheit after forcing  
17 the first meat product through the grinder screen and before forming the intermediate  
18 combination.  
19
- 20 12. The method of Claim 9 wherein the grinder screen opening is approximately one-  
21 quarter inch in diameter and wherein the second meat product is made up of a

1 comminuted meat product which has been comminuted at a grind size greater than one-  
2 quarter inch.

3  
4 13. The method of Claim 1 wherein the first meat product comprises a pH modified meat  
5 product.

6  
7 14. The method of Claim 13 further including the step of:

8 (a) adding a pH modifying material to an initial meat product to produce the pH  
9 modified first meat product.

10  
11 15. The method of Claim 14 wherein the pH modifying material comprises ammonia.

12  
13 16. The method of Claim 1 wherein the first meat product comprises Lean Finely Textured  
14 Beef and the second meat product comprises ground beef.

15  
16 17. The method of Claim 1 wherein the plurality of pieces of frozen first meat product have  
17 a first cross sectional dimension and the second meat product is made of pieces of meat  
18 having a maximum cross sectional dimension larger than the first cross sectional  
19 dimension.

20  
21 18. A method for mixing meat products, the method including the steps of:

- 1 (a) forming an intermediate combination comprising a plurality of pieces of a first  
2 meat product at a temperature below the freezing point of the first meat product  
3 and a quantity of a second meat product at a temperature at or above the  
4 freezing point of the second meat product, the first meat product having a first  
5 pH and the second meat product having a second pH different from the first pH;  
6 and  
7 (b) mixing the intermediate combination.  
8

9 19. The method of Claim 18 further including the steps of:

- 10 (a) forming a quantity of the first meat product into at least one elongated strand;  
11 and  
12 (b) reducing the temperature of the elongated strand to the temperature below the  
13 freezing point of the first meat product.  
14

15 20. The method of Claim 19 further including the step of:

- 16 (a) breaking the elongated strand of the first meat product at the temperature below  
17 the freezing temperature of the first meat product into a plurality of pieces.  
18

19 21. The method of Claim 19 wherein the step of forming the first meat product into at least  
20 one elongated strand includes the steps of:

- 1 (a) forcing the quantity of the first meat product through a grinder screen having at  
2 least one grinder screen opening.

- 3  
4 22. The method of Claim 18 wherein the step of mixing the intermediate combination  
5 includes:

- 6 (a) mixing the intermediate combination until substantially all of the first meat  
7 product in the intermediate combination reaches a temperature above the  
8 freezing point of the first meat product.

- 9  
10 23. The method of Claim 18 further including the steps of:

- 11 (a) adding a pH modifying material to an initial meat product to produce the first  
12 meat product.

- 13  
14 24. The method of Claim 18 wherein the plurality of pieces of frozen first meat product  
15 have a first cross sectional dimension and the second meat product is made of pieces of  
16 meat having a maximum cross sectional dimension larger than the first cross sectional  
17 dimension.

- 18  
19 25. An apparatus for mixing meat products, the apparatus including:

- 20 (a) a forming arrangement for forming a plurality of frozen pieces of a first meat  
21 product;

- 1 (b) a second meat product supply containing a second meat product at a temperature  
2 at or above the freezing point of the second meat product; and  
3 (c) a mixing device connected to receive the second meat product from the second  
4 meat product supply and operative to mix the plurality of frozen pieces of the  
5 first meat product together with the second meat product.  
6

7 26. The apparatus of Claim 25 wherein the forming arrangement includes:

- 8 (a) a strand forming device for forming at least one elongated strand of a first meat  
9 product; and  
10 (b) a freezing device connected to the strand forming device for receiving the at  
11 least one strand of first meat product, the freezing device operable to reduce the  
12 temperature of the at least one strand of first meat product to a temperature  
13 below the freezing point of the first meat product.  
14

15 27. The apparatus of Claim 26 wherein the strand forming device comprises a grinder  
16 including a grinder screen through which the first meat product is forced to produce the  
17 at least one elongated strand of the first meat product.